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HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND REMEDIAL MEASURES

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Abstract

Government data suggests that only one out of every seven children get the opportunity to go to college. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for higher education is poor (13.8%). This is a situation to worry so far as higher education in developed countries are concerned. Report suggests that no Indian institute was listed in the top 200 universities in a global ranking. These data are sufficient enough to understand that lack of quantity and quality both are the major challenges to our higher education system. There are some other issues which affect both the quantity and quality, hence higher education. Improper governance decreases the chances of creating additional capacity as well as quality in spite of having policies RUSA. Lack of adequate infrastructure is another major concern that should be taken care, as appropriate physical environment is the basic need for education. Although the job market has increased manifold but still remains far behind from the demand. It is also a matter of concern that majority of students are jobless even after completing higher education. Improper use of human resources is also an issue of concern. Problems are many but we have to find out the solution with a positive attitude to implement those at ground level.

Keywords- *higher education, gross enrolment ratio, quantity, quality, skill*

Higher Education in India: Challenges and Remedial Measures

The highest education is that which does not merely gives us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. ***(Rabindranath Tagore)***

These lines are real reflection of philosophy of Indian education that we follow from ancient time. The Indian education system went through a lot of reform from ancient time to present.

At present we generally follow 10+2+3 pattern nationwide as recommended by Education Commission of 1964–66 (popularly known as Kothari Commission). The first 10 years is further subdivided into 5 years of primary education (grade 1 to 5), 3 years of upper primary (grade 6 to 8), followed by 2 years of secondary education (9 and 10) and then 2 years of higher secondary education (11 and 12). The last three years belongs to higher education that is under graduate education for bachelor degree. Thus it can be said that our formal education system consists of three parts, these are basic education, then secondary education followed by higher education. Higher education is also known as post-secondary education, tertiary education or third level education is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after secondary education. Often delivered at universities, academies, colleges, seminaries, and institutes of technology, higher education is also available through certain college-level institutions, including vocational schools, trade schools, and other career colleges that award academic degrees or professional certifications (Wikipedia, 2014). In India the modern look of higher education took shape at 1857 when British ruler established three universities at Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. There were many other colleges established during their tenure. But after independences (1947) it was realised that the number is very less than the actual requirement. It is known to us that a commission was set up laid by Dr. Radhakrishnan named University Education Commission at 1948 to look over the issues related to higher education. University Grants Commission is the product of that commission. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was founded in 1956. This commission was entrusted with the responsibility to develop higher education in India. The University Grants commission Act(1956)states that "It shall be the general duty of the Commission to take, in consultation with the Universities or other bodies concerned, all such steps as it may think fit for the promotion and co-ordination of University education and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities". There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges with one lakh student at the time of independence. This number has increased to 611 universities and university-level institutions and 31,324 colleges as on August 2011 with an annual enrolment of above 250 lakh (including enrolment under Open and Distance Learning system) and it for sure there is some more institution added with these numbers till the date. The increased number of universities and college will make us happy to see that the numbers are increased manifold than that of the year of independence. But before being happy we should try to understand the real situation of higher education in India at the present time. There are many issues which are affecting our higher

education system. This paper is a trying to identify those challenges with their probable remedial.

The challenges to Higher Education: *The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems- Gandhi*

It seems to be impressive that there is a steep growth in the number of universities and colleges which can accommodate a good number of students. But we have to also keep in mind that the number of people has also increased steeply. May be the proportion of youth getting higher education has increased than that of at the time of independence but still it is very low. Report says that only one out of every seven children get the opportunity to go to college in India that is other six children do not get the chance of tasting higher education. The gross enrollment ratio (GER) for higher education is 13.6% which is very poor compared to other developed countries like US and United Kingdom etc. So to make higher education universal we need more colleges and universities and expand the capacity of existing colleges and universities to accommodate more students. 12th Five Year Plan fixes the target to increase gross enrolment ratio (GER) to 30 per cent by 2020. For this we need more institutions so that more students can enrol themselves to higher education. To provide higher education to more people of the nation is the duty of our government. But is that enough? No, with expanding the quantity we need to be concern about the quality of education we are providing. Various reports are suggesting that quality of higher education is lacking in various area of higher education. By saying various areas we are indicating general degree course, engineering, management, research etc. Report suggests that no Indian institute was listed in the top 200 universities in a global ranking; an issue to be concern. In many occasion our honorable President of India, Sri Mukherjee has pointed out this issue with emphasizing to take care of this issue. As per the data available with the NAAC, by June 2010, not even 25% of the total higher education institutions were accredited, and among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level. India is one of the countries who produce large amount Ph.D scholar but quality of the work of most of them is far beyond the standard criterion! According to the report of Hindustan Times (2011) about half the number of engineering graduates can't match Class 7 students of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) when it comes to English grammar skills. The reflection we get from the above information is enough to understand the present scenario of quality of higher education in India. There are some university like JNU, Delhi University, Jadabpur University, Hyderabad University,

University of Bombay and institute like IITs, IIMs, TIFR, and TISS are doing good job but most of the rest are lacking of quality. Thus it can be said quantity and quality are big issues which need to be taken care of. There are some other challenges which are interrelated with these key issues, like lack of adequate infrastructure. It is common experience to many of us especially who have done there under graduate degree from rural areas colleges. Most of the colleges do not have minimum facility to continue the teaching learning process. It is a common experience to find class room without proper facility of air, light and table benches, poor library and sanitation system. Another issue is lack of human resources. Colleges without principal are a common experiences and also lack of faculty, librarian and non-academic staffs. A principal is an academic as well as administrative leader in a college. So without him/her an institution will lose its direction. Another major issue is lack of job market. Although the job market has increased manifold but still remains far behind from the demand. It is also a matter of concern that majority of students are jobless even after completing higher education. There is also another contradictory problem. The graduates higher education producing is lack of the quality to be employed in the industry. According to Industry reports supported by NASSCOM, only 25% of technical graduates and about 15% of other graduates are considered employable by IT/ITES industry. In another study as reported by the Wall Street Journal (2012) "employability test" was conducted on 32,000 MBA graduates from 220 business schools across India. The test, which quizzed graduates on topics ranging from grammar to quantitative analysis, found that only 10% of those tested had skills that recruiters typically look for while hiring management graduates. In Indian context the issue of equity should not be ignored. One report of UGC observed that "Historically, education in India had an elitist and upper caste-centred basis. Higher education which is at the apex of the educational ladder is even narrower at the top since fewer students from the marginalised sections and groups graduate into it, due to either non-enrolment or high drop-out rate at the school level, high cost of education including opportunity cost, and inherent social biases in the system."

Some Remedial Measures

- **Reducing regional and social imbalances in providing inclusive access.**

It has observed that some region of nation above greater access in terms of quantity and quality (southern region) where another region has less access (north eastern region). The disadvantage group has a less access to higher education than that of others. When these

imbalances should be reduced only then we can move to expand our higher education in proper direction. For this we need to open at least one university at every district and college at every block. RUSA suggests that, "equity interventions are being built into the scheme rather than as standalone, low impact interventions. The following components would address the equity issues in a more holistic and integrated manner, thereby making a significant impact on the enrolment of deprived and marginalized sections:

- Girls hostels and girls toilets
- New hostels wherein 50% of capacity would be used for SC/ST and socially and educationally backward classes
- Converting existing buildings into fully disabled friendly environments (e.g. providing ramps, tactile pathways)
- Special facilities/equipment's for the disabled (e.g computers, lab equipments)
- Model Colleges in each district
- Special innovative programmes for focus groups and ODL strategies"

- **More financial support:**

We require more financial support from the government as well as from other agencies like private sector even from individuals. It will be helpful to established more universities and colleges as well as expanding the capacity of the existing institutions.

- **Feeling up the vacancy:**

If you want enhance the quality of higher education we need to feel up the vacancies of the teachers. There are many colleges which are running out of teachers. It creates extra pressure on the existing teachers who has to take more classes than his/her capability. This further affect his/her teaching and hence of education. It is good to hear that recently University Grants Commission (UGC) has sent a letter to every university asking to fill up vacant post as early as possible.

- **Exploring the responsibility:**

India is a big nation with her unique characteristic of diversity. So may it is possible for the government to look after all issues. So we need to make some sharing of responsibility.

1. Encouraging private sector to open new institution and assuring good quality education.
2. Allowing foreign university to open their campuses in our country.
3. Ensure more teachers empowerment

- **Focus on research and its quality:** More focus should be given to area of research and its quality to be very specific as the quality of research is not up to the mark.

- **Regular in-service programme for teachers:**

Regular in service programme like refresher course, workshop etc should be there for the faculty member in order to make them aware of the new developments related to academic areas. It will emphasize their development in the academic field.

- **Make NAAC and NBA inspection mandatory for every institute:**

It is already announced that inspection by NAAC is a must do job for the every institute and university. Otherwise affiliation will be cancelled. Such initiative will help to enhance and maintain the quality of institutions.

- **Make self evaluation and evaluation of the teacher by student mandatory:**

This is indeed in practice in many foreign universities. It will create a healthy competition among the teacher to do well which further will be helpful in enhancing the quality of classroom transaction and as well as other modes of interaction between the students and the teacher.

- **A strong governance at every level:**

It is the ultimate thing without which the excellence of higher education cannot be materialised. We require a proper monitoring system so that a systematic evaluation of facilities given, policy taken can be assessed.

Conclusion: The number of graduate India produce each year is 50 Lakhs. It is not really a bad number. But still we need more institution for higher education to accommodate more young people in order to increase the gross enrolment ratio. But at the same time we should keep in mind that quality should not be affected. The formal education may not be an only mode of confer education to the young people. There are non-formal education mode like, open and distance education, correspondence course etc. We should take care of such non-formal mode of education. Planning should be done in order to expand the range of non-formal education. At the same time it is important to identify those institutions, providing open and distance learning, which are diluting the quality of the education system by helping the students to use unethical means to get the degree. It is also important to identify those institute and universities which are not affiliated by UGC and publish their name. It should be kept in mind that main objective of education is not only getting a degree. Many surveys showed clearly that obtaining degree will not ensure someone a job. There require skill and one will get that only through constant learning. Recent survey done by a organisation named Aspiring Minds revealed that half of the graduates produce each year in India are not skilled enough to get a job. For such situation we cannot blame only the students. The curriculum

should be designed in align to the need of the society, industries and government sectors. The teachers should be aware of the needs. Conference, seminar, refresher course and workshop should be arranged by the respective authority to make them aware. Every stake holders should show accountability to their work otherwise no initiative will effect. It is also again duty of the private sectors and also individuals to help the government to run the higher education system so that it can run systematically, both in terms of quality and quantity. Problems are many but there are solutions. Just we need a positive attitude to implement those at ground level.

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